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H E A R I N G

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W O R D O F G O D

With certain and saving Benefit.

By *DANIEL BURGESS*,
Minister of the Gospel.

The F O U R T H E D I T I O N .

L O N D O N :

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TO THE READER.

THE valuable AUTHOR, whose Name is precious to many, unto this very Day, always preach'd and wrote with the utmost Plainness.

This little Treatise is peculiarly brief, clear, full, and pertinent. The Rules are admirably suited to instruct Christians in following that necessary Advice of our Saviour: Take heed HOW you hear; and may, by the Divine Blessing, be of great Service. Not forgetting another Branch of our Lord's Advice, Take heed WHAT you hear. Hear only such Preaching as tends to humble the Creature, exalt the Saviour, and promote Holiness: and hear only such Preachers as appear to be exemplary in their Conduct, serious in their Spirits, and faithful in their Work.





*Rules for hearing the Word
of GOD, with certain
saving Benefit.*

B E F O R E you Hear.

Direction I. *Pray for a Blessing.*
Ask and you shall receive it.
Sincere hearty Prayer is still a
Prevailer ; and then *most* when it is for
Gifts that be *best*. But by not asking a
Blessing, you deserve a *Curse* : because
you do virtually tell God, either that
you *need not* his Spirit, or that you *de-*
sire not the saving Efficacy of his
Word. Neglect of Prayer will ruin
the *best* Hearer ; holy Use of it will
save the *worst* Hearer.

Direct. II. *Use Forecaſt againſt Di-*
ſtractions in Hearing. Wrath, and
A 2 Lust,

Lust, and sinful Passions will take away your Heart at Sermons; but a constant cordial *Watch* and *Fight* against them, will destroy those Destroyers. God will let no Soul be devoured by them, that is diligent to keep from them: Though on the other hand, Souls that do little to *prevent* them, shall be *plagued* with them. Divine *Grace* will not encourage your sinful *Negligence*: No, but the Temptations which overtake you *wilfully*, shall overcome you *wofully*. Believe sad Experience, others and your own.

Direct. III. *Value the Word, and the Preaching of it, and thank God for them both.* Honour them for God's sake, and God will honour and bless you for his *Son's* sake, and for his *Promise* sake: God is so free of his Blessing on both, that he lets no Man who highly prizeth it, go without it. You may highly prize *Gold* and *Silver*, and go without them: but the *richer Treasure* of the Gospel is certainly your own, if you can but *supremely* value it.

If

If you do despise it, blame yourselves that you are not enriched by it. God will not throw his inestimable *Pearl* unto ungrateful *Swine*: *Swine* that will not give so much as *Thanks* for the *Pearl* of greatest Price.

Direct. IV. *Acquaint yourselves well with the Ends and Uses of the Word.* Read *Books*, and ask *Ministers*, and know as well as they, to what Purposes God sendeth his Oracles: The four comprehensive Ends are, to *convince* of Sin, to *convert* unto Jesus Christ, to *confirm* in Grace, to *direct* and *comfort* in Obedience: Understand these, and muse much on them. Come to Sermons for these, and you shall not go from Sermons without them: But *God hath not Pleasure in Fools*: and if you come to hear for you know not what, it's no marvel if you come away Fools as you went.

Direct. V. *Never forget God's Promise of Blessing on dutiful Hearing.* He cannot lie; and he has told you, *Hear*

and your Souls shall live. Keep you that Promise of his as the Apple of your Eye. It will do your Heart good to think, God hath not left himself at Liberty to *blefs* or not *blefs* your Hearing: No, but that his FREE Grace is also BOUND Grace; bound by *Word* and *Oath*. This will give you *holy Boldness*, to which God always giveth *happy Welcome*. But the want of this in your Mind, will keep it full of *curst* and *malignant* Doubts and Fears. Without a Miracle of Grace it will hold you *fearful*, and hold you *unbelieving*; that is, perishing.

Direct. VI. *Honourably use your Advocates.* All the Week long honour the *Son* of God, as he in whom alone you can ever have *Acceptance* with God: and honour the *holy Spirit* of God, by whom alone you can ever have effectual *Assistance* to any Good. No Man ever thus honoured the *Son* and *Spirit*, and went without the full Blessing of the *Word*. Without our Intercessor in Heaven, and our Intercessor in our
Hearts,

Hearts, we can *profitably* do nothing ; but with them we may do every thing *prosperously* : Therefore be Sermons every-where so lost, because this Dependance on Christ and on his Spirit are scarce any where found. O that this Word might be well weighed !

Direct. VII. *Conclude upon it, the Word will be the Saviour of Life or Death unto you.* It will cure you, or further kill you ; and give *Life to Life*, or *Death to Death*. Give yourselves this *preparatory Sermon* before you come to hear *mine*. Ministers Sermons *soften* or *harden* Hearers Souls ; they never leave you (in degrees of Good or Evil) as they find you. Such Forethoughts are ordinary *Antecedents*, and direct *Causes* of no small Good.

I N Hearing the Word.

Direction I. *Approve Plainness and Power.* Not only *excuse* and *endure*, but *approve* and *prefer* them. You
A 4 like

like best the Physician that *heals* best ; and the Counsellor at Law that *best brings you to Peace and quiet Possession of your Inheritance* ; tho' neither of them do *compliment* you at all, but *reprove* you much, and chastise your mischievous Folly with needful Severity. Be as wise for your Souls as for your Bodies and Estates. God heals the sick Souls that prefer and use his own prescribed plain Medicines : But nice and peevish Ones, that loath his *Man-na*, and must have *Quails* ; that disgust his *sharp Word*, and must be treated with Mens *smooth Words* ; such must die in their Pride and Folly. Where Preachers be but *Musicians*, Churches be but *Golgotha's*.

Direct. II. *Receive the faithful Minister's Words as God's own* : for so they are ; they are God's Words *originally* ; his Sermons as well as his Text, is all of it so. They are God's Words *materially*, as to the Matter and Sense of them. They are God's Words to you *institutedly* ; by God's Com-

Command they be spoken unto you. They are God's Words given *advantageously*; Words of God, by the Kindness of God, delivered with more Advantage for your Minds and Hearts than in the *Holy Scripture* barely read: Words of God, with a *Comment of his Appointment*: Words of God, to which he hath made a *special Promise* of highest Blessing: for *Faith* (eminently) *comes by bearing* these Words: *He that beareth you, beareth me*, saith Christ to the Preachers that he sent. Receive every Gospel-Sermon as by Christ, *preached*, and doubt not but it shall be by Christ *bles'd*: But if you take the *Words* as well as the *Breath* of a Sermon, for *ours*, the Mistake will be a deadly Loss of *yours*.

Direct. III. *Mix abundance of Prayer with your Hearing.* Souls are Spirits, their Motions are swifter than the Sun's; they *can*, and they *ought* to do two Things at once: *Ejaculation* helps *Attention*, and not hinders it: Bread

Rules for hearing

and Salt must be in every Meal, and short warm Prayer in every Duty. Let your Hearts cry out at every *Truth* delivered, *O Lord, fix this Truth on my Soul!* At every *Precept* and *Promise*, Good God, *help me to obey this Command, and to rely on this Promise!* At every *Reproof*, *Glorious Spirit, convince and humble me for this Sin, and lead me to Christ for Pardon, &c.* Such *praying Hearers* never lose their *Labours*. But wo to them, who tho' at Sermon-time they be not *deaf Adders*, yet they be *dumb Dogs*, whose *Hearts* do not to this Purpose speak, while their *Ears* hear. I do not *well hearken* to the Ambassador, when I *pray* not much to the King.

Direct. IV. *Apply to your own Souls what the Preacher saith to all.* To know *for one's good*, the Hebrews call to know *for one's self*: And do not all the World so do? Ministers be *Nurses*, Sermons be *Breasts*, God's Word is *Milk*, Hearers be the *Children*, and right Hearing is their *sucking the Milk*
into

into each one's own Soul. What another *sucks* and applies, will not *nourish* thee. Say thou then of every *Doctrine*, *This is my Lesson, I will learn it*: Of every *Command*, *This is my Duty, I will do it*: Of every *Promise*, *This is my Encouragement, and I will make Meat and Drink of it*; my Soul shall rely and feed hereon. Who ever missed of Life by the Word of Life, that so took it to themselves? Who did ever thus *suck*, and not grow by the Gospel's Milk? Blessed are they that thus *monopolize* a Sermon: While, to be sure, all are *starved* that do not thus *feed*, whatever Dainties are set before them. And they are the most *miserable of all the Damned*, who starve themselves where *they might have feasted*.

Direct. V. *Express your Reverence of God in a Sermon, unto all the Congregation.* God is specially present in *Heaven*, and at a *Sermon*: Do you believe it? Then show that Faith of yours: Shew it to your God, and to your
Con-

Conscience, by holy *Thoughts* and holy *Affections*: Yea, and shew it to all the Church by your *well-composed Countenances*, and *becoming Gestures*. Your *Bodies* are God's as well as your *Souls*: If you do not glorify him *with both*, you glorify him *with neither*. God lays no hard *Impositions* on *Aged*, *Sickly*, *Weak Bodies*: But he requires others to give him *reverent Postures*. Heads *unnecessarily* covered in *Hearing*, are *sinfully* covered, and *scandalously*. *Gadding Eyes* are impudent *Publishers* of profane *rambling Hearts*; and of those *Fools*, whereof *one makes many*. Put off your *Shoes*, and keep them off while you are on holy *Ground*: That is, *be reverent in Soul and Body*. So honour God before all the *People*, and then he shall make it seen before all the *People*, how he honoureth and blesteth you. *Irreverence* at a *Sermon*, is a publick *Call* to God for *Damnation*: A constructive bidding God to damn you, where *Hundreds* may be *Witnesses* to it; and, without God's great *Grace* be *poisoned* by

by it. [There are who say, that all Dissenters are irreverent in Worship: See you that they slander us not with a Matter of Truth.]

Direct. VI. *Honour the Preacher as a Man of God, and no more.* God styles a Minister by that Name; and God's Names be the most proper and instructive. A Minister is *but a Man*; do not therefore *adore* him as a God. Let him be so thy *Minister*, that Christ may still be thy only supreme *Shepherd and Bishop*. He is *but a Man*; expect therefore and bear with his *Infirmities*, and pray God for his *Assistances* to him. He is *but a Man*; therefore pin not thy Faith on his Sleeve, but exercise thy *own Sense*, and beg the Guidance of God's *holy Spirit*. Yet nevertheless, he is *a Man of God*, remember: If not, do not *bear* him: If so, consider while thou art hearing, he is *one that hath received the Holy Ghost*; he is *one that Christ hath qualified and commissioned, under himself, to be a Saviour of thee*, and of all that
hear

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hear him. Wherefore do not *despise* him, as not *adore* him. Thou shalt profit by him, if thou hearest him as he is, an *Embassador of God*, a *Messenger of Christ*, an *Overseer made by the Holy Ghost*. But wo is thine, if thou followest him either as a *God*, or as a *common Man*. The Gospel pronounceth no Blessing upon the *Superstitious*, or upon the *Profane*.

Direct. VII. *Project to retain as much as may be of what you hear*. All along your *hearing*, design and do what you can for *remembering*. Say over to yourselves the *Doctrine* many times, and, if you can, repeat to yourselves all the *Heads* of the Discourse: But lay fast hold of the *main Drift* of every Sermon. However *Nature*, *Sickness* or *Age* may have incurably wounded your Memories, God is gracious, remember. He will accept an *unfeigned Good-will* for the very *Deed*. His Spirit shall be a *never-failing Remembrancer*, to such as against their *Wills*, and against their
En-

Endeavours, be forgetful. He will not call them *forgetful Hearers*, that strain and strive, and do their best to be *tenacious* ones. But he will so *call*, and will *curse* those, who *like not and list not* to retain his Word, as well as to receive it. Hearers *so wilfully dull*, must look to *remain among the Dead*. As they are *slothful*, they are *wicked Servants*. And let them expect Christ's foretold Word, *Depart ye Cursed*. Heaven is no Hive for *Drones*. Ignorance is a *Curse*; and if it be your *Choice*, it will as surely be your Destruction as your Option.

AFTER Hearing God's Word.

Direction I. *Take the most earnest heed that you do not let slip what you have received.* Your Memories be the great *Servants* of your Faith, Hope and Obedience; and they are but *imperfectly sanctified*: they be too much like the Grates that let go *clean Water*, and hold *filthy Mud*. If you take little
Pains

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Pains about them, you will have but *sorry Service* from them. The best Ground will never hold the *good Seed*, if no Care be had to drive off the *Fowls* that will be coming and catching it away, and if Labour be not bestow'd to harrow it in. This Labour *for the Word* is Labour *in the Lord*; and it shall *not be in vain*. Thus do, you shall surely prosper, and do well. But if this be too much in your Conceits; if you are *lame*, and will not use *Crutches*; if you cannot otherwise *remember*, and you will not *talk* with yourselves and Families of a Sermon; nor go forth unto a *Repetition*; nor *ask the holy Spirit* to be your Remembrancer; you must take to your *Sorrow*, what you get by your *Sloth*. The *Devil* cannot rob you of a Sermon *against your Will*: and God will not keep a Sermon in your Mind *without your Will*.

Direct. II. *Let your Thanks be returned after every Sermon heard.*
Thanks and Praise are God's *dearly*
be-

beloved; the End of all his Works; of your Beings, your Redemption, your Gospel-Calls, all Ordinances and Providences. It is Hell where no Praise and Thanks are; and it is Heaven where there is nothing besides. Nothing delighteth God so much as these; and for nothing on this Earth doth God expect these, more than for his Gospel preached. When it is said, He giveth his Word, 'tis presently added, Praise ye the Lord. And this Praise we are told, shall please the Lord better than an Ox or Bullock, than any external Sacrifice. If Unprofitableness by the Word do not drive away Thankfulness, Thankfulness for the Word shall be sure to drive away Unprofitableness. Let your Thanks be more than verbal, your Profit shall be real: It shall appear to all Men. But as long as you bear unthankfully, you must be and appear unboly. Ingratitude doth, of any Sin to be named, turn Honey into Gall, and Physick into Poison. It is the same Thing, to call a Man unthankful,

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thankful, and to say he is a Samaritan, and hath a Devil.

Direct. III. *Lament your Sins in hearing, and go aēt Faith on Christ for your Pardon.* Abundance of *Dross* is in all our *Gold*. Iniquity abounds in our *holy Things*. The holiest of them all need a *thousand Pardons*, and deserve our *deepest Blushes*. And let us not flatter ourselves; *Repenting and Believing* be not *Things indifferent*, or *Acts of mere Christian Liberty*, but *indispensable Duty*. They must go before the Seal of our Pardon, in our *Conscience* or in *Heaven*. And believe it, God is incensed with Sin, *whoever* it be that sinneth, and in *whatever*. He delighteth to be *kind*, but he hateth to be *fond*. As ever you would profit by a Sermon, follow it with the *Tears of Repentance*, and with the *Prayers of Faith*. Then will God give you Profit, *with Measure pressed down and running over*. If you are too *proud* for this; in God's Name I tell you, that *Pride of yours* shall have a *shameful Fall*. The best Thing *proud*,
is

is worse than the worst that is truly
bumble.

Direct. IV. *Examine with bumble Diligence, what in hearing appeared to you as doubtful. Suspect your own Understandings more than your Minister's, But lean not rashly on your own, or idolatrously on his. If Error be in his Doctrine, it turns to Poison in thy Soul. Wherefore do not swallow what thou dost suspect. The most noble Hearers try all Doctrine by the holy Scriptures. Good Children ask their Parents Advice; wise Women ask their Husbands; the Wise of all Sorts go ask their Ministers, and intreat them to clear up by God's Written Word the Truth of their preached Word. Thus do; and whoever be barren Hearers, you shall be fruitful ones. God never fails to teach Souls so careful to imbibe nothing but Truth. O happy Church where, Mal. ii. 7. is wisely and duly observed! where Ministers Lips preserve Knowledge, and People seek it at their Mouths. But it is no more than is to be expected, if stupid*

pid *Drones* and contentious *Cavillers*, live *Idiots*, and die without *saving Wisdom*. God's Curse rests on the Idle, and he resisteth the Proud.

Direct. V. *Prove your State and Condition by every Gospel-Sermon*. You cannot try *too often*, Things whereof you can never be *sufficiently* certain: I mean so much certain, but that you will still need to be more certain. You are *true Believers and alive to God*, or *Unbelievers and dead in Sin and Misery*. You are *strong* in the Grace that is in Christ, or *Babes weak* in the same. It is a sorry Sermon by which no Help is given you, to form a Judgment of yourselves touching these Things. God's *Blessing* upon your *conscientious Care* to make use of the Help, you need not to distrust. His *Command* on you to prove yourselves, is not without a *Promise* of Blessing made to it. He ever enricheth those Hearers, who use Sermons as *Scales* to weigh, and *Touchstones* to try their Souls. But as for the *Presumptuous*, who dream themselves to be as good

good as they need to be; and the *Despairing*, who conclude that they shall remedilessly abide as bad as they are, and therefore never put the Word of God so close unto them; What Hope of these! God will *condemn* those by his Word, who will not *judge* themselves by it. If you will not make it a *Light* unto you, he will make it *Fire* to you.

Direct. VI. *Carry on your Knowledge, Memory, and every good Purpose, unto Practice.* Christian Divinity is an Art of doing more than *knowing* God's Will, *remembering* it, and *temporarily purposing* to do it: It teacheth *living unto God*. Word and Sacraments, yea Faith and Repentance, all are for Obedience. God gave his *Son*, and sent down his *Spirit*, to get him a People zealous of good Works as well as Words. Much *Fruit* it is (and not your *fair Leaves*) that glorifieth God. And it is the Hearer, *rich in good Works*, that God will *glorify*: The Hearer, to whose *Feet* the Word is a Light, to walk by it;

it; as well as a Light to his *Head*, to talk by it. I have Warrant from our Saviour to tell you; If you hear his Word, and so keep it, you shall have greater Honour than the Virgin *Mary* had in being his Mother. And do you but still *do* the Word of his that you *know*, you shall never fail to be *made know* the Word that he would have you to *do*. Use well your *Hands* and *Feet*, and he will make every Sermon a Royal Salve to your *Eyes*. But from him that practiseth not what he knows, from him shall be taken the Light that he hath: To him is promised no more Light; unto him is threatned the darkest Fire, *Luke xxviii. 29.* *Heathen Moralists* hold no Man to be so very bad, as he who *acts* Evil, and no more than *talks* of Good. *Christian ones* must needs pronounce them the worst Monsters, that speak as with *cloven Tongues*, and yet, as *Negroes*, are no where white but in the *Mouth*.

Direct. VII. *Teach your Relations what God teacheth you at Sermons.* God will

will never *forfeit* his Name of *Love*; nor fail to *reward* Charity, and specially *Soul-Charity*. It is the Devil's Proverb, *The free shall not be fat*. God's Proverb is, *The liberal Soul shall be made fat, and he that waters others shall be watered*. God will hide nothing from an *Abraham*, for this very Reason, because he will instruct all his *Family* with it. Go you now and instruct yours; so shall you be taught of God as you have never been in past Days: *Drop* Divine Truths on them, and God shall make Sermons *rain down rich Showers* on you. But vain are your idle Moans, while you are uncharitable to your Relations. If I know the Mind of God, *He will starve you if you will not feed them*. God is a great *Lover of Children*; and our Children are his more than ours. Nor can you easily incense God more, than by neglect of these his Children. I wonder not that many bear and understand not; because *what they understand, they teach not*. You may be ever learning, but you shall never come to the *saving Know-*

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Knowledge of the Truth, until you make Conscience of communicating the Truth you know. Thus spend, and God will send. Teach others, and God shall teach you; comfort them, and God shall increase and multiply Comfort to you.

When these Rules shall be observed, *Ministers* shall be joyful (both) *Fathers* and *Nurses*: the *Bed of Christ* shall be green in our Assemblies. It shall be no more querulously said, that our *Sermons* have *miscarrying Wombs* and *dry Breasts*. Joy shall be made in *Heaven*, and in the *midst of us*. *Fear* shall come on every *Soul of our Scorners*. We shall praise God as the *Primitive Christians*, and have *Favour with all the People*. The Word of God shall so run and be glorified; and God, even our own God, shall so bless us. *Amen.*

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